

---

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

---

Property Address:	<b>1329-1335 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Shaw Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
ANC:	<b>2F</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Denial Calendar
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept Review
Meeting Date:	<b>May 25, 2017</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	<b>#17-187</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Brendan Meyer</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

---

The applicant, owner David Dale, seeks concept approval for a subdivision to combine four lots from 1329 to 1335 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW into one lot and construct a three-story rear addition and roof top addition on the existing three-story rowhouses. All four houses are contributing houses in the Shaw Historic District. Plans were prepared by Square 134 Architects.

### **Property Description and Context**

The four subject houses are part of a row of five houses that were built by L.S. Chapman at about 1870.<sup>1</sup> The date of construction predates reliable building permit records, but the row is attributable to Chapman through contemporary newspaper accounts. Chapman was a prolific carpenter and real estate speculator in this part of the city for about ten years after the Civil War. The houses reflect a period of development which predates the development of the eponymous projecting bay rowhouse. The houses were originally three stories on a terrace above the current grade of 11<sup>th</sup> Street. After the street was regraded, the original half basements on the row were converted into full-height ground floors. Despite the ground level alterations, the houses exhibit many intact features of the late-Italianate flat-front rowhouses: tall proportions, widely spaced fenestration, and wood cornices featuring wood brackets, modillions and segmental arched friezes between the brackets. Three of the houses still have the one-story bays and door surrounds which were ornamented with millwork matching the cornice.

The houses are 40 feet deep and were not built with rear wings which is slightly unexpected but not unusual for the time period. Rear wings have never been added to the four houses. Instead the rear yards have been used as paved surface parking. At the third floor of 1329, the exposed brick party wall has been rebuilt, but its original dimensions have not been altered.

### **Proposal**

The applicant proposes to subdivide the lots to combine them into a single building lot. Combining the lots would allow the applicant to connect the houses internally and the concept shows large openings in the party walls at the first and second levels which are programmed as retail and office space.<sup>2</sup> The third and fourth levels are programmed as residential units laid out around corridors that cross through and across party walls. The back halves of three of the four houses would be devoted largely to new vertical systems (elevator, trash chutes, and two fire stairs). The rear addition to the row would be 27 feet deep and vary in height. The tallest section would match the four levels of the current houses and include a fifth level as a penthouse level. Other sections of the rear addition go to four stories and two stories. The fifth level of the rear addition would extend the penthouse

---

<sup>1</sup> The fifth house in the row, 1337, is on the corner of O Street and is also owned by the applicant. The applicant's drawings show alterations to 1337 which are not part of this application and will presumably be addressed in a future permit or concept application.

<sup>2</sup> The drawings label the plans first level, second level, etc. The first level was the historic basement; the second level was the historic first floor, etc.

addition 18 feet to the west and on top of the historic rowhouses. The penthouse would be 50 feet wide and provide access to a 950 square foot roof deck.

### **Evaluation**

The primary difficulty with the concept is the direct relationship between the subdivision, the proportional incompatibilities of the rear addition, and the amount of demolition requested. The Board reviews subdivisions for compatibility with the preservation act and for compatibility with the character of historic districts.<sup>3</sup> In historic districts of free-standing houses like Anacostia and Cleveland Park, the size and number of lots can directly impact the size and proportions of new construction and the rhythm of streetscapes. The subdivision question is much simpler in rowhouse historic districts if they only result in small interior openings between party walls and do not impact the appearance of the historic district. Certainly, combining lots in this way could improve the viability of renovating historic buildings, but in this case it plays a fundamental role in producing incompatibilities in the addition and might result in excessive demolition of the buildings.

Adding rear wings or additions to rowhouses is a natural pattern of growth in the Shaw Historic District. Adding or extending rear wings is a common practice across historic districts when the additions match the general patterns of the neighborhood in terms of massing and dimensions. The Board's standards for rear additions are flexible in this respect. A natural restriction that helps the Board in this respect are the property lines between houses which limit the width of additions to individual houses. In this way the width of rear additions easily relate to the historic house in a proportional way. By joining the four houses into a single lot, this natural restriction is removed. Without the restriction, the massing and dimensions of the rear addition are generated not in response to the scale and dimensions of the historic district but by the interior arrangement of units and circulation pattern. That is not to recommend that the subdivision is the incompatibility, but that the rear addition should be revised to match the historic scale and proportions of the existing buildings. Aligning rear addition walls with historic property lines could be a helpful organizing principal.

The Board must also guard against excessive demolition and that includes consideration of the interior of the houses.<sup>4</sup> Whether or not a substantial portion of the structural components of the building are removed must be taken in the full measure of the project. Removing the roof and replacing it with a new flat roof for a penthouse, deck and green roof is a large component. Add to this the substantial removal of the rear elevations in order to accommodate the rear addition, the numerous openings in party walls at all levels, the corridors planned to cross row, and the new vertical circulation cores, only the front facades and portions of the floor assemblies will remain.

While the primary difficulty of the subdivision is uncommon, more common problems with the concept exist which should not be overlooked. The penthouse addition is not setback sufficiently from the south elevation so it is substantially visible enough to alter the perceived dimensions of the row. At the streetscape, while improvements could certainly do much to restore missing and highly altered conditions, the overall plan should be revised to be more uniform in nature across the entire row and make use of straight-run stairs instead of turned stairs.

### **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Review Board advise the applicant to revise the concept design as described above and return to the Board for further review.*

---

<sup>3</sup> DC Municipal Regulations 10C Historic Preservation, Sections 2002.1 and 2002.4(c).

<sup>4</sup> DC Municipal Regulations 10C Historic Preservation, Sections 305.1(b), "Work considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to...the removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of the building, such as structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs;